

# Report from South-East Regional Board Meeting 8<sup>th</sup> December 2018

*This report has been drafted by and represents the views of the 8 Momentum and CLPD backed candidates elected to the Regional Board from the CLP section (Lisa Fricker and Cal Corkery, representing Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, Gemma Bolton and David Hide, representing East and West Sussex, Michaela Collord, representing Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, Karen Constantine, representing Kent, Nada Al-Sanjari and Shelley Grainger, representing Berkshire and Surrey), the Young Labour representative (Sarah Cundy), and three Unite representatives (Gordon Lean, Sarah Hacker, and Elaine Bolton).*

## Acronyms

**BAME** – Black Asian and Minority Ethnic

**CAC** – Conference Arrangements Committee

**CLP** – Constituency Labour Party

**LGBT** – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender

**NEC** – National Executive Committee

**MEP** – Member of the European Parliament

## Introduction

This was the first meeting of the South East regional board following the Conference in Southampton on 3rd-4th November, in which a number of left-wing CLP representatives were elected. We were voted in on mandates of improving the accountability and transparency of the regional party, and making sure that it contributes as much as possible to the election of a Labour Government led by Jeremy Corbyn. Overall, we felt we contributed to key discussions and secured consensus around key issues such as the importance of improving communication with members, and improving the accessibility of the Regional Conference. However, there is still a lot of work to do.

## Agenda items 2-4 Election of Officers

It quickly became obvious that the left caucus on the Board would tie with established Board members on votes for Chair and on other Executive positions.

The vote for Chair was a dead heat between **Vince Maple** and **Lisa Fricker** (Left candidate), with the vote tied at 12-12. It was agreed by consensus that **Vince** and **Lisa** should joint-chair the meeting, and then guidance be requested from the NEC on whether co-chairing is a viable arrangement, and if so, how co-chairing should work, practically speaking. If it is confirmed that co-chairing is allowed there will be a further vote on whether to have a co-chair arrangement for the 2-year term or whether to have one Chair in the next meeting.

Three additional executive positions are in the SE Regional Board's Standing Orders: Campaign Co-ordinator, Party Development and Membership Co-ordinator and Partnership in Power Co-ordinator. However, it quickly became clear that these roles had atrophied and had not been filled for at least 8 years, and that there are no role descriptions for the officers, so nominees would

not know what they were signing up for. This realisation reinforced the importance of clarifying the structures and procedures of regional boards, as well as ensuring that the regional board remains an active body. It is to be hoped that the NEC, which is due to discuss this issue in January, will agree on standardised rules for regional boards which will clarify these matters.

In the meantime, there was a lively discussion over whether to elect the officers immediately or to establish a working group to define the officer roles and elect them at a later date. Again, there was a deadlock between those of us who wanted to get people in the roles quickly and iron out the details later, and those who wanted the roles fully defined first. After much back and forth, the Board decided by a narrow majority to establish a working group to define the roles, and seek guidance from the NEC on regional board matters including the idea of co-chairs. The working group meet in early January and will then report back to a special meeting of the Board to be held in early Feb, where all roles (including Chair) will be properly elected. All Board members can feed into the process, via email.

**Working Group: Lisa Fricker, Vince Maple, Mark Chiverton, Shelley Grainger, Ann Black, Gordon Lean, Martin Phillips, Karen Constantine.**

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## **Agenda item 10 – brought forward - Report from John Howarth MEP**

**John Howarth** presented a written report about his work in the European Parliament. In particular he emphasised the importance of advocating for retraining and re-positioning workers from extractive industries to work in renewables.

**Michaela Collord** (CLP Rep from Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire) asked **John** what he thought we could do to help in the fight against the far-right. **John** replied that Socialist Parties' vote share in the European Parliament is likely to drop from the mid-20s to 16/17%. Socialism is still a minority view and in the fight against the far-right we need to persuade people who are not necessarily of our ideology and take them with us on policy.

**Nada Foster** (CLP Rep from Berkshire and Surrey) asked **John** what he thought can be done at the CLP level fight the rise of the far right.

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## **Agenda item 5 Action points from last meeting**

**Action points and/or minutes** should be distributed to Board members swiftly after the meeting. These should also go out to CLP secretaries for distribution to members.

### **Disciplinary and complaints:**

- We asked if a report could be drawn up of how many complaints have been made and how many disputes and complaints have been resolved or remain outstanding.
- Members are understandably anxious and want to know more about efforts to resolve issues. Some CLP reps have already been approached to ask about individual cases - some of which have been outstanding for two years - and the members concerned have asked for a speedy, fair resolution.
- No confidential details should be disclosed to Board members, as a matter of course.

- It was agreed that **Amy Fode**, Regional Director, would write a short report on this and feed back to the Board.

**Amy** clarified the role of Board in disciplinaries/appeals: as board members we might be asked to assist in local govt appeals on selections, as well as PPC selections and membership appeals. Board members are likely to be approached on a geographical basis, as a practical consideration, but office staff also try to achieve gender balance and union/CLP balance within panels.

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## **Agenda Item 6 Regional conference review**

It was noted that Regional Conference is likely to be changed from a bi-annual event to an annual one.

### **Positives**

- Well attended event - 350 delegates attended.
- Campaigning workshops were interesting & excellent feedback was received on the local govt session.
- It is extremely welcome that creche facilities were provided for first time: **Amy** said that seven children in total used the creche and 2 families' children were there throughout.

### **Comments on Accessibility & affordability.**

- The main hall at the University was too large & there were problems with acoustics.
- No hearing loop / Signer for deaf. (**Amy** pointed out that no needs were communicated)
- The rostrum was too high - inaccessible for those in wheelchairs. Can this be remedied next time?
- Could we have lower prices for youth delegates and visitors?
- Inclusivity of fund raiser should be improved, so it is accessible for individuals on a low income. (The socialist raffle is a good move in this direction)

### **Other points and suggestions**

- An objection was raised against using Nestle products. Could we make sure future supplies are bought from ethical & Fairtrade companies only?
- Can the next conference be held in the north of the region? Milton Keynes was suggested as proposed host, or Reading.
- The protest about the Brighton Pavilion motion at our conference should not have been necessary. This was foreseeable and should have been dealt with in advance. Adverse publicity in local papers resulted.
- Where CLPs submit motions and they are ruled out of order, someone could ring the CLP and help them re-draft.
- There was a suggestion that motion debates be re-ordered. This time we had proposer, seconder, debate and then all votes were taken at the end, after all motions were discussed. This feels counter-intuitive, and it would make more sense for votes to be taken after each debate.
- More time should be timetabled for debates.
- What will happen to the motions passed? These will be sent to CLPs/Labour Group Leaders & Shadow ministers.

- An independent CAC should be elected – not made up of Board members. Elected from CLPs and affiliates.
- The balance of delegates should be better: More BAME, LGBT and disabled delegates.
- Merit awards – could this be explained better? One merit award per region is presented at national conference, those left over are recognised at regional conference.
- The location of the Conference should feature a celebration of the town or city in which it is held, in this case Southampton.
- Wherever the conference is held, we should bring the community IN to the conference as much as possible.
- A neutral person – someone not standing in the election concerned - should announce the results of elections.

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## **Agenda Item 7 Democracy Review update**

The Democracy Review is still ongoing.

Have submissions to the DR closed? Although officially yes, it seems that all further submissions are being considered.

Proposal to have a **Rural Rep** on the Regional Board will come to the meeting for a decision next time.

Establishment of LGBT/BAME/Disability Conferences have been suggested. One problem with increasing our quota of conferences, as well as the organisational pressures, is the difficulties of CLPs in paying for all their delegates.

Some parties have problems with funding and struggle – if members can't attend the CLP is disenfranchised. Could the Party meet cost of one delegate from each CLP for all conferences, centrally?

It was agreed that Vince and Lisa would write a letter from this Board requesting the first delegate from each CLP for each Conference is paid for centrally.

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## **Agenda Item 8 Local Government Elections 2019**

Aim is to get highest number of candidates in region that we have ever stood. There should be an option to place a cross in a Labour box in every ward in the South-East in this May's elections.

At the same time, investing in candidates in target seats should be prioritised, without giving away our strategy to the opposition.

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## **Agenda Item 9 Parliamentary Selections 2019**

Parliamentary candidates can only be selected when allowed by Regional Office. Currently there are seven seats with the go-ahead to select.

CLP reps wanted to know how these are prioritised as many – if not all – CLPs are anxious to get their Parliamentary Candidate in place, bearing in mind the precarious state of the govt.

The timing of selections is usually made nationally looking at voting patterns, although other factors come into play, such as demographics of area and whether they are next to other key seats.

Training will be offered by the LP on how to participate in Parliamentary selections.

NEC have decided that CLPs should select their own Candidates for seats.

**Cal Corkery** (CLP Rep for Hampshire & Isle of Wight) fed back from Portsmouth North that they wish to get on with selections. They had a 10.55% swing in 2017 and other seats with less of a gain are currently selecting. In addition, it would be helpful for Portsmouth South MP Stephen Morgan to have a running mate campaigning alongside him.

**Karen Constantine** (CLP rep for Kent) also requested that North Thanet be allowed to move ahead and select its candidate.

Nada Foster (CLP Rep for Berkshire and Surrey) asked for clarity regarding the allocation of resources to prepare for a future General Election. **Amy** emphasised that this is a complex process, and that there are no set criteria.

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## Agenda Item 10: Reports

### Report from Regional Director

Slough is now out of special measures. Although the Regional Board will have a role in local government selections there until 2020.

### Action Saturdays planned for 2019 so far

- Sat 26<sup>th</sup> Jan
- Sat 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb
- Sat 23<sup>rd</sup> March
- Sat 27<sup>th</sup> April

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### Dates for next meetings:

Dates for the next year of regional board meetings are being reviewed to ensure meetings are held on days which are accessible to as many Board reps as possible.

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